



JERUSALEM'S GLORY

Thomas Watson



*A Puritan's view of
what the church should be*

Edited by
Roger N McDermott M.A. (Oxon)

Christian Heritage





Roger N McDermott is a graduate of the University of Oxford and an historian. He has written for the New Dictionary of National Biography, as well as contributing historical articles to The Banner of Truth Magazine and Evangelical Times. He is also the editor of a range of puritan titles for Christian Focus Publications. He lives in Kent with his wife Melanie.

Introduction © Roger McDermott

ISBN 1 85792 569 6

Published in 2002 by
Christian Focus Publications
Geanies House, Fearn, Ross-shire
Great Britain IV20 1TW

www.christianfocus.com

Cover design by Alister MacInnes.

Printed and Bound by
Cox & Wyman, Reading Berwickshire.

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form, by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise without the prior permission of the publisher or a license permitting restricted copying. In the U.K. such licenses are issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.





Editor's Dedication



For My Wife Melanie





INTRODUCTION

The puritans have a deserved place of honour in the history of the Christian Church as a godly and self-effacing people. Their work and writings come to the modern reader as a refreshing dose of spiritual honesty in a world so beset by spiritual darkness and deceit. In fact they provide wholesome food for the soul of the hungry Christian. The Israelites in the days of Moses were provided with Manna to eat, and they called it 'Manna' since they 'wist not what it *was*' (Exodus 16:15). But Christ declared himself in the fullness of time to be 'the bread of life' who offers real nourishment to the souls of those who feed on him, by faith (John 6:35).

The success of the puritans lay in their recognition of Jesus Christ as the only appointed mediator of the New Covenant, and as Head, King, Saviour and Lord of his own Church. They placed Him who is 'a chief cornerstone' (I Peter 2:6) at the very centre of their worship, doctrine, preaching and way of life. To a fallen and sin-sick world they unashamedly proclaimed 'Christ-crucified' as the only God given way of salvation.





Jerusalem's Glory

It can only be a false religion that does not confront the problem of man's sin and rebellion with the impending Judgement of the Holy and Living God and the way of salvation through the atonement of the Eternal and only-begotten Son of God, Jesus Christ. The religion of the puritans was true religion. It was Reformed and stood on the sure and certain ground of the word of God; it was also a heart felt religion that aimed at the glory of God. To achieve this meant avoiding lightness and trivia in the worship of God and cultivating holiness in the daily life of every Christian. In other words, puritan belief was implemented in practice.

The following book, *Jerusalem's Glory*, written in 1661 by Thomas Watson, contains all the hallmarks of what made the puritans great. It represents a clarion call to the Church to recognize her waywardness and repent, turning to the Almighty God and casting herself on His mercy. Its author did not employ 'enticing words of man's wisdom,' (I Corinthians 2:4) but sought to apply biblical truth and sound doctrine as a means to achieving the stated aim. Here we gain some insight into the virtue of a puritan preacher of the gospel, speaking plainly to the ills of society, and in particular to the Church, that according





Introduction

to the Scriptures is ‘a city that is set on an hill’ (Matthew 5:14).

But what was so wrong with society that it required such sharp rebuke? And in what way had the Church gone astray in 17th century England? Against the background of so much godly preaching in puritan England, did not the Church show signs of progress and even of greater unity? In order to answer these questions it is worthwhile remembering the condition of society and the Church at the time, and in particular the context in which the work was first published. It is also important to establish the credentials of Watson as the author of the text, in offering his critique of the spiritual malaise that was spreading far and wide, almost crippling the health and witness of the Church. Finally, it must be shown what bearing the author’s work continues to have in our day.

England witnessed great changes and enormous conflict during the 17th century. Politically conflict and war marred it; disputes were increasingly contributing to an atmosphere of hostility and hatred. But important issues were at stake as the conflict between crown and parliament was played out. The issue of liberty featured prominently, ever since





Jerusalem's Glory

the fragile Tudor balance in Church and State was destabilized by the ascendance to the throne of James I in 1603. His brand of kingship and distaste for parliament seemed to pose an open threat to the liberty of the subject. Charles I carried this to an extreme, as the issue of 'crown rights,' came to dominate the minds of men.

No one seriously doubted that kings ruled by the authority of God, however the practical application of that was a matter of sharp division. The constitutional unity of the nation was fractured for a time as men divided into 'Royalists' and 'Parliamentarians.' The bloody and cruel civil wars that ensued in England affected the whole of the British Isles. Wars are never regarded as a desirable way of settling disputes, even less so in the case of a civil war.

Charles I had not desired war, what the Stuart ruler struggled so desperately to achieve was a uniformity of the multiple kingdoms which he ruled over. The great liberty that the British people knew in the period, was their historical deliverance from the tyranny of Rome. The Reformation of the Church was the singularly most important blessing enjoyed among the people; the gospel of Jesus Christ was giving true liberty to souls. The Stuart





Introduction

monarchs endeavoured in the pursuit of their own power to undermine this liberty; the drift back toward Rome was both slow and insidious.

To achieve uniformity within the Church, in 1637 Charles I imposed a Prayer Book on the English model on the Scots. This was far removed from Knox's *Book of Common Order*. The rejection of it the following year signalled the signing of the National Covenant. Shortly after the Bishops Wars confirmed the failure of royal policy, with the Scots calling for the abolition of Episcopacy in Scotland. Before too long, the same demand was made within the English Parliament.

The times called loudly for resolute men, strong in the faith and relying solely upon the Living God, to contend for the faith. That was certainly visible in the gathering of the puritan divines at the Westminster Assembly between 1643-6. Of those, Baxter contended that the world had not known such a gathering of eminent godly men, since the Council of Jerusalem in the first century.

Thomas Watson did not seem a particularly brilliant man to his contemporaries. Yet he earned their respect as a godly preacher of the gospel. A serious and diligent man, he emerged from relative obscurity to a certain prominence within the Church that brought him into conflict





Jerusalem's Glory

with the enemies of the gospel. Perhaps as the Scriptures record of David, the greatest accolade that Watson may be given is to say that 'he had served his own generation by the will of God' (Acts 13:36).

Born in Yorkshire between 1617-19, information on the early life of Watson is markedly scarce. When he was of age, he went to Emmanuel College, Cambridge, in 1635. There he gained a reputation as a very industrious student, achieving his B.A. in 1638-9 and proceeding to M.A. in 1642. The timing of Watson's conversion is not known, but on his arrival at Emmanuel College he would have had in theory an express interest in the ministry of the gospel. For it will be remembered that Emmanuel was set up in the 16th century to provide the Church with educated and godly ministers. By 1635, the college was flourishing as a centre of godly learning, and a 'hotbed' of puritan activity. Many of the great puritans were educated at the University of Cambridge, such as, Cartwright, Perkins, Sibbes, and Charnock, to name but a few. In particular, at Emmanuel, eminent divines were raised up by God to further the cause of Christ in the nation. Not least of these was John Preston, appointed as Master of Emmanuel in 1622. The value of his written work was highly regarded by many fellow





Introduction

puritan ministers, among whom Richard Sibbes and John Davenport tirelessly edited the works of Preston after the death of the latter in 1628. These works included, *The New Covenant*, *The Golden Sceptre*, and perhaps more widely known, *The Breastplate of Faith and Love*.

The influence of Preston at Emmanuel cannot be overstated. His stance as both a puritan and presbyterian did much to lay the groundwork for the growth of presbyterianism within the Church of England and beyond. It was in that godly environment that Thomas Watson was educated, and it is of little surprise to find him later fully committed to the presbyterian model of Church government.

The year of Watson's entry to Cambridge did not seem unusually significant. It saw the development of a postal service in England. It also saw increasing conflict in both Church and state, through the activity of William Laud and Charles I. Parliament had not met in England since the king had prorogued it in 1628. All of the dissension spreading throughout the country revolved around a struggle for the preservation of liberty and justice. Not least did this express itself in the Church, which seemed to many to be in danger of drifting back toward Romanism, and declining from the standards of





Jerusalem's Glory

the 16th century Reformation.

As the years of study passed for Watson at Cambridge these problems on the wider front were reaching a critical stage. Archbishop Laud had destabilized the fragile political balance throughout the British Isles by his innovative ecclesiastical practices and his espousal of Arminian heresy. Charles I seemed to share his Archbishop's enthusiasm for Arminianism, but rapidly sought to distance himself from this position after the downfall of the former. Parliament was forced to oppose the errant and inflexible monarch, and in 1642, the first civil war erupted in England.

At precisely this time Watson emerged from his studies, proceeding to his M.A. in 1642. By that time he was no doubt eager to begin his pastoral ministry, but God had other plans for him. God used the interest in personal correspondence generated by the development of the postal service in 1635, as a means to guiding his servant. In another part of the country, in Castle Hedingham, Essex, the godly Mary Tracey, Lady Vere, wife of Horatio Vere, was busy forming links with puritan ministers. Indeed the historical record bears witness of her friendships with many eminent divines, corresponding with William Ames, John Dod, Obadiah Sedgewick,





Introduction

Richard Sibbes and Thomas Watson. Lady Vere did much to help godly ministers, especially in times of distress and persecution, she also promoted the advancement of godly men into vacant churches.

Between 1642-46 Watson resided in the household of Lady Vere, and patiently waited on God's timing of his entry to the ministry. One other woman that he had to meet before taking up his first church, was a woman of whom less is known, but who undoubtedly also influenced him for good; her name was Abigail Beadle, the daughter of another puritan, John Beadle, minister in Barnston, Essex. In 1646, Watson married Abigail in Barnston, and shortly afterward he entered the ministry. Ordained as a clerk at St. Stephen's, Walbrook in London in 1646, he continued preaching there until his ejection from the Church of England as a consequence of the Act of Uniformity in 1662, which witnessed the Great Ejection of around 2,000 puritan ministers of the gospel.

Amidst the grand surroundings of the ornate interior of St Stephen's, later re-designed by Sir Christopher Wren, Watson proclaimed the whole counsel of God, preaching simply and to the hearts of his hearers. In those years his written ministry





Jerusalem's Glory

also flourished. These included *The Art of Divine Contentment*, *The Christians Charter*, *The Beatitudes*, and *Jerusalem's Glory*.

In the Providence of God, Watson was brought into severe testing of his convictions during the early part of his ministry. He was among a group of Presbyterian ministers who presented a remonstrance to Oliver Cromwell and the Council of War, protesting against the execution of the king in 1649. Later in 1651 he was involved with a number of other men in the 'Love plot' to bring Charles II to England and restore the monarchy. For his pains he spent four months in the Tower of London, released after petitioning for mercy. But he was later tested in a much more personal way when called on to decide on the impending Act of Uniformity.

Shortly after the Restoration of Charles II in 1660, the initial euphoria and the high hopes of many puritans for a settlement of the divisions of the Church gave way to more sober views. The government was moving swiftly toward enacting intolerant legislation that would apparently resolve the disunity of the Church. The puritans were regarding the situation with increasing concern. All the signs of growing intolerance toward sound doctrine and true religion were noted with alarm among the godly. The Church





Introduction

having swung one way, then another, being dogged by Arminianism under the misguided leadership of Archbishop Laud, and afterward taking steps towards compelling the uniform observance of the Book of Common Prayer in the Church of England, seemed in the grip of another departure from the truth of the gospel. This was all in the name of unity, or rather uniformity, as monarchy and ecclesiastical leaders cooperated in achieving a forced ‘peace’ within the Church.

In April 1661, the second Savoy Conference was called, in an effort to find such a peace for the divided Church. Many were skeptical, and were soon proven correct in their assessment of the intentions of those pursuing the policies of the Restoration Church. The Savoy Conference considered the objections of the puritans to the Prayer Book. It consisted of 12 representatives on either side, each with a number of assistants. Among the Episcopal delegates, were Frewin, Archbishop of York, Sheldon, Bishop of London, and Cosin, Bishop of Durham. The puritan delegation included Manton, Reynolds, and Baxter. Despite the efforts of the puritans, the conference did little to heal the divisions opening up within the Church; in fact the Bishops had fixed the outcome against their





Jerusalem's Glory

opponents. As Bayne later reflected on the outcome of the conference, saying, 'the yoke of the ceremonies is not relaxed by a jot or a tittle.'

The undoubted aim of the puritans at the Savoy Conference was to promote true unity among all Protestants. They drew up a list of objections to the Book of Common Prayer. They asked that the gift of prayer be permitted to continue without hindrance; called for the abolition of readings from the Apocrypha; the Authorized Version of the Bible, 1611, should be used exclusively; the term, 'minister' should replace 'priest;' the power to exclude Christians from the sacrament of the Lord's Supper when under the discipline of the Church, should lie with the minister; and greater explanation of the doctrines of the Reformed Faith included in the Catechism. The Episcopal authorities duly declined these.

The godly had faithfully discharged their duties under God, the truth of which was attested to by Baxter in his autobiography, 'England had been like in a quarter of an age to have become a land of saints and a pattern of holiness to the world, and the unmatched paradise of the earth. Never were such fair opportunities to sanctify a nation lost and trodden underfoot as have been in this





Introduction

land of late. Woe be to them that are the causes of it.’

As the Savoy Conference was still in session, the ‘Cavalier’ Parliament was called in May 1661. Here Clarendon began the process leading to the passing of the Act of Uniformity the following year. At the opening of that Parliament, the Lord Chancellor referred to the puritans as ‘seditious preachers.’ The hatred toward the godly was much in evidence, but perhaps of greater concern was the act of publicly burning the Solemn League and Covenant, which the King had taken on oath several times. The promises of the King lay in tatters; his word to God and his subjects were openly flouted.

At precisely this time Thomas Watson, in the spring of 1661, published the following work. Shortly afterwards he and many other puritans, were called upon to publicly react to the passing of the Act of Uniformity, in 1662. They chose to obey God rather than men, and the Great Ejection that ensued is adequate testimony of their convictions and their love of the truth.

Recognizing the spiritual ailments of his day, as well as the possibility of separation that lay ahead, Watson was principally concerned for the spiritual welfare of Christians, and in particular his own





Jerusalem's Glory

congregation. He loved those people, faithfully ministering to their needs for many years; above all they required leadership and direction at a time of general confusion. In *Jerusalem's Glory* these are the pre-eminent features: a pastor's care for his own flock, and indeed for the wider Church.

The original subtitle to the book provides further evidence as to the author's motives in writing the work, *The Saints' safety in Eyeing the Church's Security*. The chief concern of the author was that of the safety of the saints; he is concerned with the wellbeing of true Christians. But safety in what? In 'eyeing,' or considering the security of the Church, for that security is promised to her by the Living and true God. This message of comfort was especially required during the affliction that the Church was under at the time. To offer any durable comfort the message itself had to address difficult and serious issues, it also had to remind the people of God of His dealings with his people in former times. It is clear from the text that Watson believed certain things that were wrong in the Church had to be put right, in order that God would bless His Church. But what was so terribly wrong in the Church?

1. *Disunity* within the Church was sadly on the increase. Disunity in the Church is always a





Introduction

product of *error*. The denominations of the Reformed churches were often unable to display genuine Christian unity among them. Independents disagreed with Presbyterians and Episcopalians were divided against each other as well as other denominations. Watson could recollect the unseemly spectacle of the godly in Scotland and England taking up arms against one another during the civil war. The various conferences such as the Hampton Court Conference of 1604 or the Savoy Conferences later in the century brought no resolution to the existing ecclesiastical division. A marked level of disunity continued even after the meeting of the Divines at the Westminster Assembly between 1643-46, which certainly arrived at a basis for Church unity, however much ignored.

2. *Declension* from the truth of the gospel was a common feature of life in the Church in the author's experience. As suggested above this was the twin sister of disunity. It reared its ugly head by means of churchmen holding erroneous views concerning the validity of tradition as well as the Scriptures as the basis of authority in the Church. The reformers and puritans held that the Scriptures alone constituted the court of final appeal in all matters of controversy in religion: once this was





Jerusalem's Glory

subverted the floodgates were opened for declension in the purity of the doctrine, worship and discipline of the Church.

3. *Innovation in the worship of God* went hand in hand with the declension from sound doctrinal truth. The Laudian party devoted their energy to the beautification of the Church, for whom the externals of worship such as surplices or altarpieces were very important. The puritan party of course, saw these externals as the mere vestiges of Romanism, with all its appeal to the senses and the natural man. In fact their continued presence within the Church of England provided the main grounds of the puritan call for the further reformation of the Church. The Church was in danger of losing her way, drifting away from the standards of the Reformation; consequently almost any novel idea from leading churchmen gained acceptance in the worship of God. Against this innovative spirit the puritans stood together on the principle that God alone has commanded in His own word how He will be worshipped: all else stems from the corruption of our nature and equates with idolatry, which is forbidden by God.

4. *Man-centred and outward religion* became popular once again, despite the blessing of the 16th century Reformation. Monarchy and prelates co-





Introduction

operated in the promulgation of unbiblical practices in the Church that placed its emphasis on the outward and visible. The wearing of the surplice was one of a host of examples. Heart religion was being rapidly shunned as an embarrassment and a needless thing. Arminianism required like Romanism, the giddy appeal to the senses of outward show and pomp. In the early 1660's the Laudian party were triumphing in the Church.

5. *Covenant Breaking*, was perhaps the most dramatic feature of what was wrong in the Church. In 1643 the 'Solemn League and Covenant,' was 'approved by the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, and by both Houses of Parliament, and the Assembly of Divines in England.' The breach of this National Covenant was possibly the greatest act of treachery in the history of these Isles; its repudiation by Charles II in 1661 presaged the bitter persecution of the Covenanters in Scotland.

The answer to these ills in the Church presented by the author may be summarized as follows. Watson begins by briefly considering the condition of the people of God during the Babylonian captivity as expressed by the sacred writer in Psalm 137. Here God's people were found suffering under the affliction of the Babylonians, and in such a condition they could only cry out to





Jerusalem's Glory

God for deliverance. It was a painful and bitter experience and is recorded in the Scriptures for the instruction of the Church in all ages.

The afflicting hand of God was upon the Church, and its cause lay in the sin of the people. God could not bless His Church until it had been dealt with; rooted out and repented of in the lives and practice of His own people. Of course this was not new in the history of the Israelites, for they could easily recall the occasion of the sin of Achan in the camp: equally in that instance God required the sin to be confronted and dealt with.

Watson deals at length with the issue of Christians being marked out as those whose promises are carried through in their daily lives. They ought to be covenant keepers rather than covenant breakers, note how far he carries this in chapter 8. The Church of his day had broken its loyalty toward the God of the Covenant in so many ways and had to be warned of the consequences of these actions. There could be no circumventing the serious problems of the Church, from her divisions to her declension from the truth. Christ would maintain His controversy with the Church and demand repentance. As another puritan, Richard Rogers, once confessed, 'I serve an exact God.'

There was no easy route to unity and spiritual





Introduction

prosperity on offer from the preacher of St. Stephen's; no soothsaying nor false comfort for those 'that are at ease in Zion' (Amos 6:1). The route outlined in *Jerusalem's Glory* is an old, well-trodden path: well trodden that is by the saints of God. True unity lay in true religion exemplified by a life lived in vital union with Christ; it was a lesson learned historically time and again by the people of God.

In a time of national and ecclesiastical declension from God, the puritans were painfully aware that 'righteousness exalteth a nation, but sin is a reproach to any people' (Proverbs 14:34). That message was relentlessly proclaimed by the puritans, who reminded man of his duty before God, and the Christian duty of the obedience of faith.

It is a seminal lesson from the history of the Church that can only be ignored at incalculable cost to Christians. Our modern generation knows much of sin, but less of its awful consequences; far less still of righteousness. Worldliness and a sickening appetite for pleasure, self-seeking and innovation too infect the Church. The departure of national churches from the standards of the Bible and true religion is everywhere in evidence. This spiritual malaise, exacerbated by apathy, is





Jerusalem's Glory

invading many of the churches that lay claim to be Reformed. Men are filling our pulpits whose spinelessness prevents them from proclaiming the whole counsel of God. The Achan's of the modern Church have become innumerable.

But blessed is the God of our fathers, who will be praised from generation to generation, that He has raised up a standard against evil. A faithful few are still by the grace of God proclaiming the eternal truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Watson as already noted, 'served his own generation by the will of God,' he faithfully laboured for its spiritual and moral improvement through the gospel. Today his writings continue in the same vein, being an influence on their readers for good. In this spirit, this work of Thomas Watson, long out of print, is wholeheartedly commended to the reader. Look beyond its author and the historical context, to the Eternal and unchanging God; search the Scriptures, and establish for yourself whether these things are so. And if on reading the work you come to share the author's depth of conviction, then act upon this by living a godly life and by enjoying God now. Labour also, as Watson did, for the Reformation of the Church; putting right the things that are wrong and offensive to God. Do not content yourself with knowledge of the truth, and a mere outward show





Introduction

in religion, but close in with God in Christ and show your love for Him through obeying His commands.

Almost a century earlier, the Genevan reformer John Calvin commented on the love toward the Church that every believer ought to have: ‘The Lord’s people, while they mourn under personal trials, should be still more deeply affected by the public calamities which befall the Church, it being reasonable that the zeal of God’s house should have the highest place in our hearts, and rise above all mere private considerations.’ This expresses the sentiment of the inspired Psalmist and the people of God, during the Babylonian Captivity that forms the subject of Psalm 137. As the New Testament Church was foreshadowed in the Old Testament, there are clear lessons for the Christian Church that deserve close attention. Sin within the camp must be purged out. This is true of the Church, as well as the individual believer. To seek the blessing of God upon His Church, first entails our corporate and individual reformation; then God will return in His infinite mercy, to bless His Church.

The life and work of Watson after the first publication of this text in 1661 and his ejection from the National Church the following year, is a model of godliness and spirituality. He faithfully





Jerusalem's Glory

laboured in the ministry of an independent Presbyterian Chapel in Crosby Square, London, and was later joined there by Stephen Charnock as co-pastor between 1675-80. His written works that became so highly valued include *A Body of Divinity* (an exposition of the shorter catechism), *Heaven Taken by Storm* and *Religion Our True Interest*. But at the heart of Watson's religion was a personal and experiential knowledge of Jesus Christ, denoted by his individual holiness and love for the truth of the gospel. Two brief examples will sufficiently convey this.

Calamy recorded the instance of the author's meeting with Bishop Richardson prior to 1662, who was so impressed by the preaching and public prayer of Watson that he requested a copy of the prayer. Watson replied, 'Alas! That is what I cannot give, for I do not use to pen my prayers; it was no studied thing, but uttered *pro re nata*, as God enabled, from the abundance of my heart and affections.' Neither in preaching nor in praying did Watson rely on a dry outward form of words. Finally, Calamy also provides evidence of his closing in with God in prayer, noting the passing of the author at Barnston, Essex in 1686 whilst engaging in prayer: a fitting and noble testimony to his practical Christianity.





Introduction

Let us then clearly follow the Scriptures in these things. The Church cries out in her affliction for the downfall of all false religion and the prosperity of true religion. The epitome of false religion is of course found in Rome, the great mystical Babylon; but the triumph of Christ and His Church is assured. The American Presbyterian, Plumer, writing in the early 19th century commented on this, ‘How glorious will be the final triumph of the Church over her great adversary, the mystical Babylon, when the loud cry of the mighty angel shall be heard, “Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen!” (Rev. 18:2). But let every idol and the vestiges of false religion be first rooted out of our own hearts: for the praise and glory of Jesus Christ. To that aim and the furtherance of true Church unity, may the words of Thomas Watson be a source of encouragement.

Roger McDermott

